

Fall Turkey Harvest Report 2005

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Abstract

The fall hunting season structure was change in 2005, with 10 days being added to the season. The 2005 fall turkey season ran for 40 days, from 1 October through 9 November. The number of permits available increased from 79,178 in 2004 to 85,678 in 2005. Permitted hunters harvested 10,650 turkeys for a success rate of 12.4%. This rate represents a decrease in success from the fall hunt of 2004 when 13.1% of permit holders killed a bird. Factors that may have affected success rate include the statewide bow hunt, an Antlerless Only deer hunt, and the special CWD deer hunt units. Forty-three turkey management zones and the Fort McCoy zone were open to hunting in the fall of 2005.

Methods

Harvest information was obtained through mandatory registration of harvested turkeys. Turkey registration stations were paid either \$35 for the season or 35¢ per bird registered, depending on which amount was greater at each station. Registrars were required to collect the zone, date of kill, sex and age of each turkey killed. Registration records were entered into the DNR UNIX production server by regional personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

The fall hunting season structure was changed in 2005, with 10 days being added to the original 30-day season. This was done to allow hunters to enjoy an extended season and increase their chances of bagging a bird. Past modern fall hunts have ranged from 7-30 days.

Hunting Zones

Forty-three turkey management zones and Fort McCoy (Figure 1) were open to fall hunting in 2005. State Parks are not open to fall turkey hunting like many of them are for spring.

Permit Levels

Permit levels vary depending on the spring hunting success, amount of timber, hunter interference, and turkey population densities and distributions within zones. With turkey brood production above average for most of the state in 2005, and spring success leveling off, the WDNR Wild Turkey Committee only increased permit levels in a few zones for the 2005 fall season (Table 1).

Permit Selection

All applicants were required to pay a \$3 fee for an application. Preference for permits was given first to landowners (up to 30% of permits available), followed by residents who applied for but did not receive a permit in the fall of 2004, other residents, and finally non-residents. Applications were randomly selected, but first choice zones of all applicants within each preference category were issued available permits before second, third, fourth, etc. choices were filled.

Harvest and Success Rates

Fall turkey hunters harvested 10,650 turkeys in the fall of 2005. This is a slight increase from the 10,362 harvested in the fall of 2004. Data on the historical fall turkey harvests are summarized in Table 2 and Figure 2.

The fall hunter's success rate (percent of permit holders that harvested a turkey) decreased from 13.1% in 2004 to 12.4% in 2005. Only one zone had a success rate of 20% or greater while 14 zones had a success rate of less than 10% (Table1). As is normal, the statewide archery deer hunt overlapped the entire fall turkey season, as well as 45 deer units that had an Antlerless Only deer hunt which overlapped 4 days of the fall turkey season. Also the southern 1/3 of the state had a special CWD gun deer hunt which overlapped 4-14 days of the fall turkey season. All hunters are required to wear blaze orange during these deer seasons, except archery, which probably had the effect of eliminating days of turkey hunting. Another factor that may have an effect on success rates is availability of permits; as permits become more common, they may fall into the hands of the less devoted turkey hunter, primarily bow hunters who may apply for a turkey permit on the off chance that one might walk under their tree stand while bow hunting. These less dedicated hunters may never go out with the sole purpose of hunting turkeys. Fall Turkey Hunter surveys show that hunter participation in 2005 was 67%, lower than the average between 1989 and 2004 of 74% of fall permit holders. Hunter success rates are uncorrected for non-active hunters, actual success rates are higher.

Age and Sex Ratios

The number of adult turkeys harvested (60%) was lower than in 2004 (66%). Females comprised 62% of the harvest while males accounted for 37%. Adult females comprised 35% of the fall harvest, juvenile hens 28%, gobblers 25%, jakes 12%, and unknowns <1%. Adult males comprised a smaller part of the harvest than in 2004 (36% gobblers).

Adults are generally believed to be less vulnerable to fall hunting than juveniles, particularly for hens. The decrease in adult harvest could be due to the increase in turkey brood production in 2005, making more juveniles available for harvest. There are probable prestige biases at work also, where hunters are reluctant to admit to killing a juvenile bird. Registration station attendants confusing jakes as adult hens, or the hunting methods and selectivity of Wisconsin hunters toward adults could also be factors effecting adult to juvenile ratios.

Accidents

There were no fall turkey hunting accidents reported in 2005. Since fall hunting of turkeys began in 1989 there have been 25 non-fatal hunting accidents with an average of 1.6 per year.

Table 1. The turkey zone open to fall hunting, turkey kill by age and sex, permits issued, and permit success rate for 2005.

Zone	Toms	Jakes	Hens	Juvenile Hens	Unks	Total Harvest	Permits Issued	% Success
1	20	17	26	34	0	97	1,000	9.7%
2	29	21	33	53	0	136	1,500	9.1%
3	91	44	109	95	0	339	3,500	9.7%
4	19	11	35	30	0	95	1,000	9.5%
5	31	23	61	41	0	156	2,200	7.1%
6	16	10	33	31	0	90	1,300	6.9%
7	47	29	79	58	0	213	2,600	8.2%
8	41	5	41	40	0	127	1,400	9.1%
9	39	21	90	47	0	197	1,500	13.1%
10	9	8	18	14	0	49	600	8.2%
11	29	31	36	71	0	167	1,600	10.4%
12	92	36	108	99	2	337	2,600	13.0%
13	33	10	47	51	0	141	1,200	11.8%
14	15	16	63	63	0	157	1,500	10.5%
15	41	33	90	80	0	244	2,200	11.1%
16	27	20	63	42	0	152	1,700	8.9%
17	88	54	145	128	0	415	3,300	12.6%
18	90	49	169	122	0	430	4,100	10.5%
19	75	40	126	77	0	318	2,500	12.7%
20	75	33	82	68	0	258	2,100	12.3%
21	141	76	258	242	0	717	5,000	14.3%
22	267	127	418	293	0	1,105	8,000	13.8%
23	171	109	265	227	0	772	6,800	11.4%
24	61	20	64	48	1	194	1,200	16.2%
25	84	50	97	61	2	294	2,500	11.8%
26	33	20	34	38	0	125	800	15.6%
27	16	6	21	14	0	57	500	11.4%
28	15	10	27	25	0	77	601	12.8%
29	1	2	4	1	0	8	100	8.0%
30	38	18	46	38	0	140	900	15.6%
31	7	4	11	7	0	29	300	9.7%
32	13	2	15	4	0	34	200	17.0%
33	129	39	140	101	0	409	2,200	18.6%
34	212	76	217	164	0	669	3,500	19.1%
35	33	19	34	15	0	101	600	16.8%
36	51	27	41	24	0	143	700	20.4%
37	130	54	138	74	0	396	3,200	12.4%
38	67	23	80	56	0	226	2,000	11.3%
39	27	12	36	30	0	105	1,200	8.8%
40	26	18	37	30	0	111	1,200	9.3%
41	103	28	90	72	0	293	1,800	16.3%
42	68	33	94	63	0	258	1,500	17.2%
43	56	31	84	62	0	233	1,200	19.4%
FM	12	5	10	7	0	34	277	12.3%
UNK	1	1	0	0	0	2		
Totals	2,669	1,321	3,715	2,940	5	10,650	85,678	12.4%

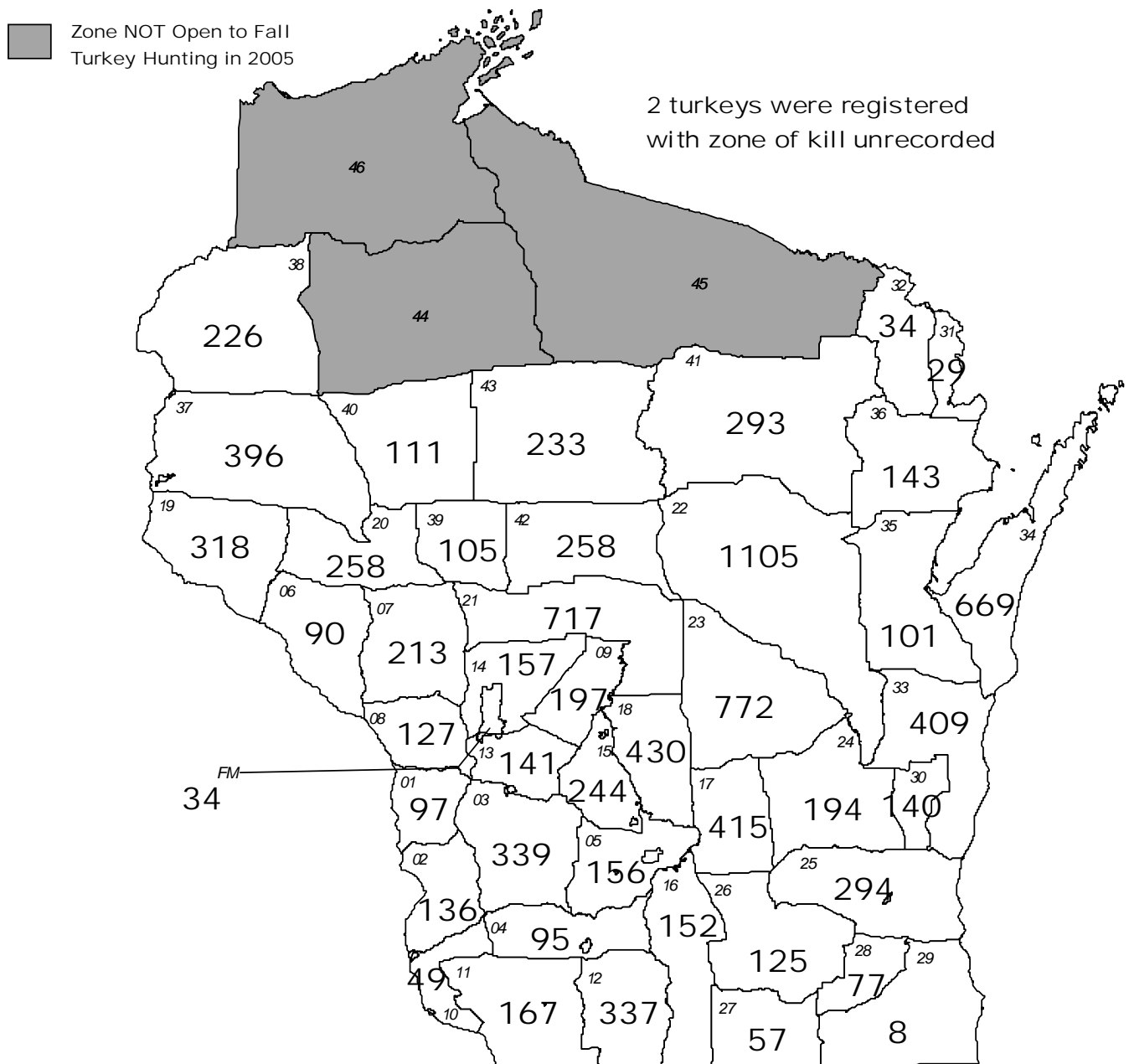


Figure 1. *Fall turkey harvest by zone, 2005.*

Table 2. Historical number of permits issued, harvest, and permit success for fall turkey hunting, 1989-2005.

Year	Permits Issued	Harvest	Permit Success
1989	7,260	1,570	21.6%
1990	12,465	3,433	27.5%
1991	16,668	2,904	17.4%
1992	24,997	5,024	20.1%
1993	31,449	5,625	17.9%
1994	17,889	3,896	21.8%
1995	28,555	6,241	21.9%
1996	30,779	6,305	20.5%
1997	32,569	6,004	18.4%
1998	41,131	8,845	21.5%
1999	55,479	10,825	19.5%
2000	69,566	11,263	16.2%
2001	71,601	11,029	15.4%
2002	75,040	10,860	14.5%
2003	78,831	12,554	15.9%
2004	79,178	10,362	13.1%
2005	85,678	10,650	12.4%

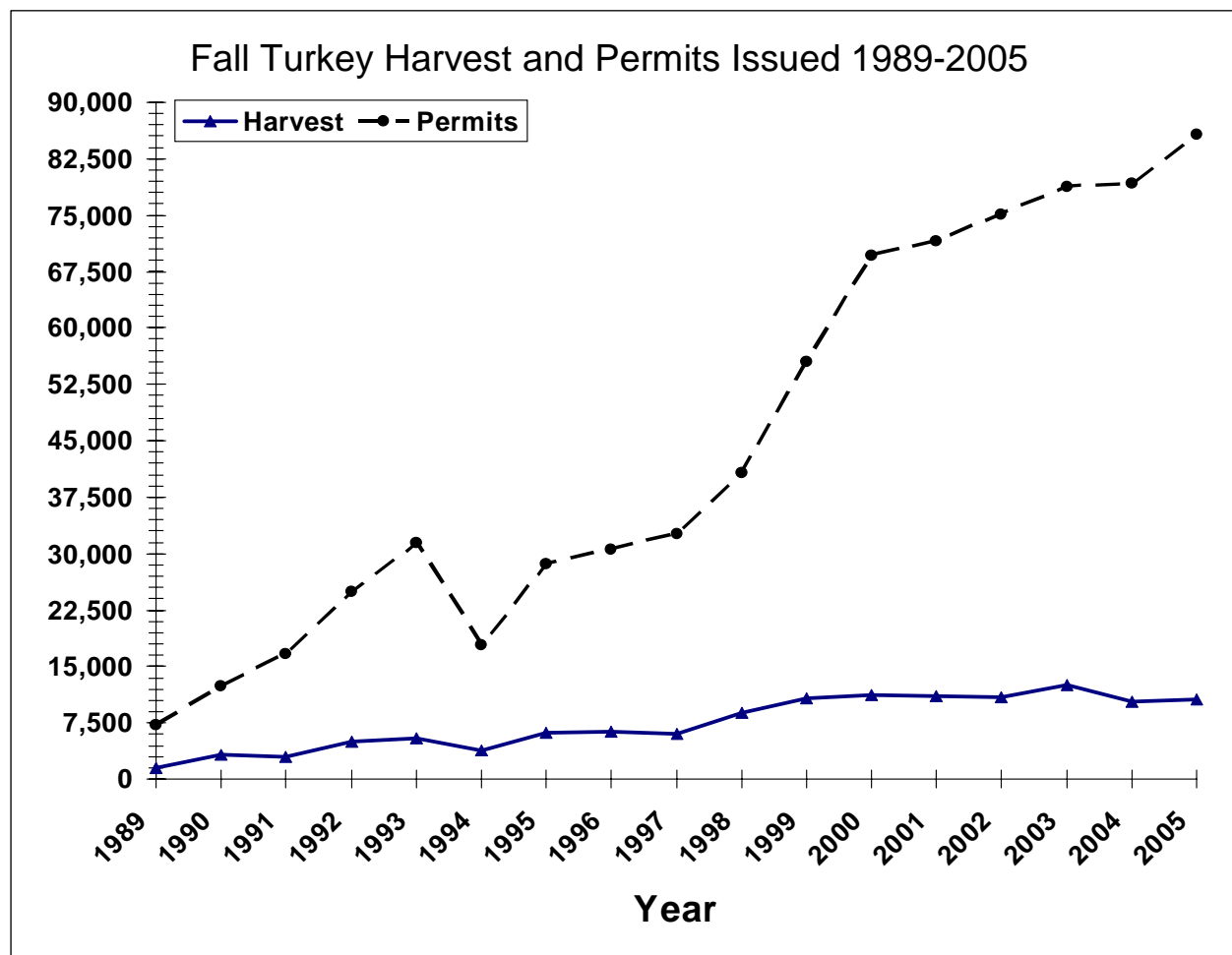


Figure 2. Fall turkey permits issued, and harvest, 1989-2005.